

RED KANGAROOS

Headings and Trigger words
Use this column to write down a heading or trigger words to summarise each paragraph.

Red kangaroos are the largest of the marsupials and are famous for their hop.

Their very powerful back legs work like springs. The kangaroo can hop as far as eight metres and as high as three metres. They have a long tapering tail which balances the body as they hop. They stand upright on their legs and can be as tall and as heavy as a man. They have much shorter front legs.

Red Kangaroos live in the central part of Australia which is mainly desert. They do not have a place that is home and can cover large distances in search of food. They rest in the shade of scattered trees during the day and sometimes dig holes and lie in the cool sand. They also keep cool by panting and by licking their front legs and fur.

Kangaroos move around during the night eating grass and plants. When there is water they will drink it but if they get enough green food they do not need it.

Kangaroos give birth to one baby at a time. The baby spends the first three months in its mother's pouch drinking its mother's milk. After seven months the young kangaroo will leave the pouch for good, but it will still stay around its mother for some time to learn how to find food and for protection. If food is scarce, the mother's milk will dry up and the baby in the pouch will die to allow the mother to survive.

Red kangaroos move about in feeding groups called mobs. These are not fixed groups like a herd. Being part of a mob helps them to warn each other of danger. They will stamp their back feet or thump their tail and the mob will scatter in all directions. Males fight over females. The strongest males get to mate with the females. They box or wrestle each other with their front legs. They also support themselves on their tail and use their powerful back legs to kick each other.

An adult kangaroo has little to fear from predators. They can easily escape because of their speed and because they can leap high in the air. They can also kill predators with one kick from their powerful legs. Large hawks and packs of hungry dingoes hunt kangaroos, but they look for a sick adult or a young kangaroo that has wandered away from its mother.

People are not usually interested in living in the desert so the red kangaroos' habitat is not in danger. Sheep farmers on the edge of the desert have made life easier for kangaroos. They provide short grass for their sheep which the kangaroos like to eat. Because of this the government has to make sure the number of kangaroos don't get out of control. They shoot between one and two million red kangaroos each year.

